

30

THE
DUTY OF ABSTAINING
FROM THE USE OF
WEST INDIA PRODUCE,
A SPEECH,

DELIVERED AT

Coach-Maker's Hall,

JAN. 12, 1792.

A. M.
K

What hast thou done? the voice of thy BROTHER'S blood
crieth unto me from the GROUND, Gen. iv. 10.

If only a *thousandth* part of the horrors attributed to the
SLAVE TRADE be necessary to it, who doth not see that
COMMODITIES coming through *such* hands, are SOAKED
IN TEARS and STAINED WITH BLOOD.

Mr. Robinson's Sermon on Slavery.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR T. W. HAWKINS, 39, BOROUGH; AND
SOLD BY M. GURNEY, HOLBORN; T. KNOTT,
LOMBARD-STREET; J. BRUCE, CITY-ROAD;
W. BUTTON, NEWINGTON-CAUSEY;
AND AT MR. UFFINGTON'S LI-
BRARY, HACKNEY.

[PRICE TWO-PENCE.]

WEST INDY PRODUCE
ADVERTISEMENT

A SPEECH

MUCH discussion has not been employed on the nature of the SLAVE TRADE and of West India business. The evidence produced before the House of Commons on those subjects, is so clear and pointed, as to render not only a total abolition highly needful, but any possible delay criminal to an extreme degree. Evidence, however, seems to be wanting in its effect upon a majority of the House—or at least the consequence of the interference of the Slave Trade, which is more than probable) we have to lament, that the operation of that conviction was counteracted by an influence not less powerful and insidious, than the cause for which it was exerted.



Considering the present state of the Republication of the People, this intervention in the voice of reason and humanity, cannot be matter of much surprise. But to whatever cause we may be disposed to ascribe the conduct of Parliament, the People have existing the means of redress in their own hands. These

ADVERTISEMENT.

MUCH discussion has of late been employed on the nature of the SLAVE TRADE, and of WEST INDIA SLAVERY. The Evidence produced before the House of Commons on those subjects, is so clear and pointed, as to render not only a *total Abolition* highly necessary, but any avoidable delay *criminal* to an extreme degree. That Evidence, however, seems to have failed in producing its natural effect upon the minds of a majority of that House—or if they were convinced of the manifest INJUSTICE of the Slave Trade (which is more than probable) we have to lament, that the operation of that conviction was counteracted by an INFLUENCE, not less shameful and iniquitous, than the cause for which it was exerted.

Considering the present state of the Representation of the People, this inattention to the voice of reason and humanity, cannot be matter of much surprise. But to whatever cause we may be disposed to ascribe the conduct of Parliament, the PEOPLE have evidently the means of redress in their own hands. There

exists no law by which they are *obliged* to use the Produce of the West India Islands—they have only to lay a restraint upon themselves individually, to **ABSTAIN FROM THE CONSUMPTION OF THAT PRODUCE**, and the end must eventually be accomplished.

The Revenue arising from the *Home-Consumption* of Sugar and Rum has, for many years, been very considerable—in proportion, therefore, to the *decrease* of that Consumption, must be the *failure* of the impost thereby raised. And if, as is generally believed, the **MINISTRY** are *divided* on the question respecting the **ABOLITION**, nothing seems so likely to *unite* them in support of that just necessary measure, as the prospect of a *certain diminution* of **REVENUE**, if it be not speedily effected. At all events, the People at large will be free from the *guilt* of promoting a traffic, which is equally at variance with the true principles of Commerce, and every sentiment of Justice and Humanity!

13 MR 63

SOUTHWARK,

W. A.

January 31st, 1792.

A S P E E C H, &c.

QUESTION.

Is it not the DUTY of the PEOPLE of ENGLAND, from a principle of MORAL OBLIGATION and regard to their NATIONAL CHARACTER, to abstain from the CONSUMPTION of WEST INDIA PRODUCE till the SLAVE TRADE is abolished, and measures are taken for the Abolition of SLAVERY?

MR. CHAIRMAN,

I FEEL a considerable degree of pleasure in being able to say, that I rank among the number of those who abstain from the Consumption of West India Produce—that I am induced to this, not from an affectation of singularity, but from a firm persuasion of Duty—and that I regard it as a duty which no considerations of pleasure, or convenience should set aside.

This Duty, Sir, is both *real* and *important*, though its novelty may have excited, in some minds, sentiments of ridicule and contempt. There are persons, capable of treating the most solemn, and long-established truths with levity and indifference: and if this were to weigh against their reception, there is not one good principle of which the human mind might not be deprived, nor scarcely any duty, however *proper* and *necessary*, of which we might not be excused the performance. It was a lively remark of the pious Mr. Hervey, that *the whim of making ridicule the test of truth, seems as suitable to the nature and fitness of things, as to place Harlequin in the seat of Lord Chief Justice*. The fact indeed is, that ridicule is *not* the test of truth, but truth is the test of ridicule: and were it not, still the subject before us would demand a serious and sober discussion.

In speaking to the Question, Sir, I shall endeavour to illustrate the *Nature* and *Importance* of the Duty therein stated.

The

The Duty of *abstaining* from the Consumption of West India Produce, arises out of the Connection which subsists between the *Consumer* of that Produce, and the *Means* by which it is cultivated.

That connection, Sir, is more close and direct than some persons may be willing to admit. The *CONSUMER* of West India Produce, may be considered as the *Master-spring* that gives motion and effect to the whole Machine of Cruelties—for him ultimately, the expedition to Africa is first concerted—for him the British sailor, naturally averse to the service, is first kidnapped, and then literally transported to the regions of disease and death—for him a fertile country is annually plundered of its Natives, and thereby prevented from being civilized—for him the horrors of the Middle Passage are realized, those scenes of dejection and despair: So much Misery condensed in so little room; as Mr. Wilberforce emphatically described it—for him—but it is unnecessary here, to characterize either the

inhuman traffic, or that abject personal Slavery which, of consequence, prevails in the British Islands—it is a chain of WRETCHEDNESS every link of which is stained with blood! and it involves in equal criminality the AFRICAN TRADER—the WEST INDIA SLAVE-HOLDER—and the BRITISH CONSUMER!

Nothing can be more evident (at least to my apprehension) than that the CONSUMER of *West India Produce* is the principal cause, both of the continuance of the SLAVE TRADE, and of the prevalence of SLAVERY. For, I would ask, *why* is the Slave Trade pursued at all? Is it not to supply the Planters with men to cultivate their lands? and why are the lands cultivated, if not to furnish the people of Europe with their produce? It must be clear then, that if that produce were not consumed, it would not be imported—if it were not imported, it would not be raised—and if it were not raised, there must be an end of the whole system of Slavery. These deductions, Sir, I know are general, but they serve to illustrate the connection

connection existing between the Consumer of West India Produce, and the Means by which it is obtained.

From this Connection, Sir, it appears that every individual Consumer must participate the combined guilt of every part of this system of Slavery! It is no extenuation to say, that his share of the Produce is small, and therefore the guilt he may thence contract is of no consequence—if such reasoning were to be admitted as conclusive, we should be deprived of one of the strongest motives against the commission of any Vice. You know, Sir, we argue against the practice of Moral Evil, from its tendency, and from its apparent consequences, supposing it to become universal.

This Connection might also have been illustrated by a reference to the Principle upon which PUBLIC CHARITIES are supported—An individual Subscriber to a Benevolent Institution, cannot have a more direct concern in the GOOD thereby collected, than a Consumer of West India Produce has in the EVIL attendant on the Slave Trade! And the same mode of reasoning by which he would excuse himself in the use of the one, must lead him to give up every idea of assisting the other!

sal throughout the Creation—the desol-
 ation and ruin it would every where
 occasion. Every act of vice is a ten-
 dency to *this*: it is that *begin*, which,
 carried on, would end in *defacing the*
beauty of all the Creator's works. Now
 what the universal spread of Moral
 Evil would produce in the Creation at
 large, the Slave Trade actually effects
 in a part of that creation—and if the
 former consideration should deter us
 from the pursuit of Vice, so ought the
 latter from the Consumption of West
 India Produce; the tendency and the
 consequences of EACH being precisely so
 far the SAME. No plea whatever can
 diminish the AGGREGATE OF GUILT by
 which the SLAVE TRADE is distin-
 guished—and it becomes us to say of
 every part of this system, and of every
 thing connected with it, *Here's the*
smell of blood on the hand still, and all the
perfumes of Arabia cannot sweeten it.

That the SLAVE TRADE ought to be
 abolished, every man is now ready to
 admit—its injustice and impolicy no per-
 son will deny. Every one shrinks with

horror

horror at the idea of trading the persons of Man—every one sees the cruelty with which it is unavoidably attended—and all conspire to wish that it no longer existed. CONSISTENCY, therefore, of sentiment and conduct, requires of every man not to encourage, in any manner, a Trade which he believes to be unlawful and unjust.

WEST INDIA PRODUCE is the direct and immediate fruit of SLAVERY, and the CONSUMPTION of that Produce operates as the vital spring and energy of the whole system. The SLAVE TRADE can receive from no man greater encouragement, than by his Consumption of the PRODUCE—the African Captain, and the West India Planter, desire nothing more from us than quietly to use the article, and not trouble ourselves about questions of CONSCIENCE—and no friend to NEGRO SLAVERY (if there lives such a wretch) could possibly do more towards rivetting its CONTINUANCE than by a steady purchase of the Commodity so raised! If then we are sincere in wishing the ABOLITION of the

SLAVE TRADE—If we indeed *compassionate* the *poor SLAVES*, we are bound, from every consideration, to **ABSTAIN** from the **CONSUMPTION** of the **PRODUCE** which they cultivate. But if, while we pretend to *commiserate* them, we consume the fruit of their *Misery*, we falsify our *Sentiments*, and justly incur the application of that *sarcasm*, by which a **SPARTAN** once characterized the **ATHENIANS**—*They were not ignorant of Virtue, though they forbore to practise it.*

There is hardly an argument, by which we are convinced that the **Slave Trade** ought to be abolished, that does not apply with equal force, to the **DUTY** stated in the Question. If from a principle of **Moral Obligation** as **MEN**—of **Religious Obligation** as **CHRISTIANS**—or of **Political Obligation** as **MEMBERS OF CIVIL SOCIETY**, we ought to seek the **Abolition of SLAVERY**—these also are so many *Reasons* why we should abstain from the **CONSUMPTION** of **WEST INDIA PRODUCE**.

As Men, we must feel the insult which is offered to the DIGNITY of Human Nature in the Persons of the Slaves! as possessed of the common feelings of humanity, we must be shocked at the MEANS to which they are doomed! As Men, therefore, it becomes us to resent the indignity: to reject West India Produce, because it would gratify our appetite at the expence of Liberty and Virtue; and thus assert the RIGHTS of violated HUMANITY by actions—not merely by words! We affect to respect the claims of Humanity—shall we then ENCOURAGE those who go every year to bind in chains, literally to bind in CHAINS, thousands of the Natives of Africa! We call the Moors barbarians, because they invade the Liberty and make Slaves of the EUROPEANS, forgetting that, by the Consumption of West India Produce, we countenance the still more horrid, and far more extensive DEPRADATIONS, committed by ENGLISHMEN on the Coasts of AFRICA! Humanity, Sir, as Mr. Fox most feelingly remarked,

marked, consists not in a squeamish ear-
 it consists not in starting or shrinking at
 such tales as these—but in a DISPOSITION
 of HEART to relieve misery, and to pre-
 vent the repetition of cruelty. Humanity
 appertains rather to the MIND, than the
 nerves, and it will prompt man to use
 REAL and DISINTERESTED endeavours to
 GIVE HAPPINESS TO THEIR FELLOW
 CREATURES.

As CHRISTIANS, we profess to re-
 ceive the Scriptures as of Divine Au-
 thority, and to make them the rule of
 our faith and practice. Now that the
 Genius of CHRISTIANITY is directly
 against every species of SLAVERY, few,
 if any persons, will deny—keeping in
 view the Connection which subsists be-
 tween the CONSUMER of West India
 Produce, and the MEANS by which it
 is acquired; that Maxim of immutable
 Obligation—ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER
 VER, ye would that men should do unto
 you, DO YE EVEN SO UNTO THEM—is
 of sufficient force to establish the Duty
 before us. It is not enough that we
 speculate upon the Scriptures, we must

enter into their spirits, and obey their
 Commands. Christians are not merely
 to *cease to do evil*; they are to *learn*
 to *do well*; on the one hand, they
 are to have NO FELLOWSHIP with the
 WORKS OF DARKNESS *; and on the
 other, Whether they EAT or DRINK, or
 WHATEVER they do, they are to DO ALL
 to the GLORY OF GOD—that is—We
 are to exhibit the PERFECTIONS OF DE-
 LITY in our conduct. COMPASSION IS

* 2 Eph. v. 11. To purchase or to consume
 West India Produce, is to have fellowship with
 works of darkness:—Therefore, we are commanded
 not to purchase or consume West India produce.
 No Christian, I should imagine, will call in ques-
 tion the propriety or extent of this Command. That
 the West India produce is obtained by *Works of*
darkness, or improper and sinful means, cannot be
 denied. If then we purchase, or consume that Pro-
 duce, we have fellowship with those works of dark-
 ness by which it is obtained.—We have FELLOW-
 SHIP with the works of darkness—when we are
 the cause of their being practised—when we counte-
 nance them—when we enjoy the fruit of the works
 of darkness, knowing it to be such—and when
 we do not what we lawfully and innocently may
 do in order to prevent them.—Happy is the man
 who, in these respects, CONDEMNETH NOT HIM-
 SELF in that thing which he ALLOWETH!

represented as one of the most prominent features (if I may so speak) in the Divine Character. If then we form just ideas of our duty; if we listen to the Voice of CONSCIENCE, and are submissive to the Authority of SCRIPTURE— we shall, when West India Produce is presented to us, turn indignant from the sight, and exclaim with David, upon an occasion not altogether dissimilar— *My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: SHALL I DRINK THE BLOOD OF THESE MEN?*

* 1 Chron. ii. 19. David, in the hearing of three of his military officers, wished for a little water of a certain spring. The Philistine troops were then in garrison defending the fortification where the spring was. The officers of David broke through the host of the Philistines, probably by killing some of the soldiers, and certainly at the hazard of their own valuable lives, took water of the spring, and returned with it to David. What did he? He took the water, but recollecting what they had hazarded to procure it, and very likely observing they had stained themselves with human blood, the water had lost its chrysal in his eye, it seemed blood in the cup, he could not drink it, he poured it out with horror, exclaiming as he looked up to the FATHER of LIARS, *My God forbid it me,*

As MEMBERS of CIVIL SOCIETY, we must be sensible of the vast importance of *Civilization*. Now the continuance of the *SLAVE TRADE* impedes every degree of *improvement* that might be introduced among the natives of Africa. We have seen that the *progress* of this trade must always be in proportion to the *encouragement* which it derives from the *Consumption* of *West India Produce*. If, then, we wish the *extension* of *HUMAN HAPPINESS*—if we are anxious for the *spread* of the *advantages* of *CIVILIZED LIFE*—we shall *abstain* from the *Consumption* of *West India Produce*, because, under the present circumstances, such consumption must effectually *restrain* the *advancement* of *Knowledge* and *Happiness* in Africa.

We are called upon to abstain from the use of *West India Produce*—as *BRITONS*, friends to *universal FREEDOM*. *Shall I drink the blood of those men, who have put their lives in jeopardy to begeth manifest with the SPIRIT of CHRIST?*

As Taken by Mr. Robinson, p. 21, 22

The

The love of LIBERTY has always been a distinguishing characteristic of the People of this country—the man whose pulse does not beat high for freedom, is destitute of the only PRINCIPLE by which an Englishman differs from a Turk. From this principle I infer the Duty in the Question.—

Every friend to freedom must be an enemy to SLAVERY—every friend to freedom, therefore, should unite in an opposition to Slavery.—

Abstaining from West India Produce is, in this case, opposition to Slavery, and every friend to freedom is bound to give it his support on *that* ground.—

Whatever opinion he may hold of the efficacy of such a measure—how little soever he may feel the Moral obligation he is under to do—As a friend to universal freedom, he is bound to cherish every kind of opposition to Slavery.

WEST INDIA SLAVERY is the most *abject* in itself, and attended also with the most *Diabolical Circumstances*. The Arguments for its Abolition not only meet

meet our Reason, our Humanity, and every Religious principle of the human mind—but they address themselves to our several SENSES. We have seen exhibited in this Hall, what was very properly termed, an *IRON argument**, that no friend to freedom can resist—for he cannot surely look with indifference on such a state of servitude as this! LIBERTY belongs exclusively to people of no particular colour, nor of any particular country—it is an universal Blessing, the inherent Right of all men; and the friend to general freedom must, on this principle, be an enemy to WEST INDIA SLAVERY.

* Referring to an *iron Mask* which a Gentleman had produced and put on in the Hall. He informed the Company, that it was usual in the West Indies to Mask the Slaves, to prevent their killing themselves by eating dirt—he observed that as the best of inventions were liable to be perverted, so it had happened to this humane design—it was frequently put on the Negroes in crop time, lest they should eat the cane: and sometimes on the days that they might not eat the soup—It is indeed, impossible for them either to eat, or speak, while the Mask is on!

To

To Abstain from the Consumption of West India Produce is, in my opinion, the *best* opposition that can now be made to West India Slavery, and most forcibly demands our concurrence and example. The public attention is already excited—a spirit of Enquiry universally prevails—and the love of LIBERTY appears to be reviving. It is the duty of the friend of Freedom, to fan the generous flame till every atom of Oppression be consumed, and there remains no part of the human race to claim his services! he should

*Grasp the whole worlds of reason, life, and sense,
In one chief system of Benevolence.*

This Duty becomes the more binding and urgent, from the disinclination which PARLIAMENT has shewn to afford redress. That true Representation of the People, honestly shut their ears against the voice of the most tragical, yet best-established Evidence, that was ever produced for any cause, on any occasion—Nay, more—

*In BRITAIN'S Senate, MISERY'S pangs gave birth
To joys unseen, and to horrid mirth!*

A collection of FACTS the most undeniable, and at the same time the most shocking, that the human imagination can conceive, was treated as the fabulous invention of a new-fangled humanity! and the utmost efforts of the most splendid talents, were of no avail against the vile influence of West India Slaveholders. From the virtuous Legislature of this country, therefore, little remains to be expected! the decision of last year, on the Slave Trade, marks the character of that Assembly with a precision not to be mistaken! in vain have REASON, HUMANITY and JUSTICE, pleaded for the poor AFRICAN! It is time then that the PEOPLE show themselves. It is time that they manifest to Europe and the World that public SPIRIT, that virtuous abhorrence of SLAVERY to which a BRITISH SENATE is unable—or unwilling—to aspire!

If such, Sir, are the Motives from which we ought to Abstain from the Consumption of West India Produce, they *must*, I presume—nay, I am *sure* they *must*—be felt in all their benign and extensive influence, by every FEMALE breast!

Is it possible, Sir, that the LADIES of ENGLAND, possessing a sense of *Virtue*, of *Honour*, and of *Sympathy* beyond those of any other nation—is it possible for THEM to *encourage* the SLAVE TRADE!

Can they persist in the use of an Article, obtained at the expence of the *Lives* and *happiness* of MILLIONS of their fellow creatures!

Can they think of the CONNECTION subsisting between the consumer of WEST INDIA PRODUCE, and the cruel Means by which it is acquired—and not reject that Produce!

Can they hear the VOICE of HUMANITY, demanding that the SLAVE TRADE be *Abolished*—and yet *promote* the continuance of that traffic!

Can

Can *they* feel the mild influence of CHRISTIANITY—and not *act* upon it!

Are *they* alive to the enjoyment of the blessings of SOCIAL LIFE—and yet dead to the pangs of *parting* RELATIVES—MOTHERS *torn* from their CHILDREN—WIVES *severed* from their HUSBANDS—and the violation of ALL THE TENDER TIES OF BLOOD—which this inhuman traffic occasions!—IMPOSSIBLE!

In them 'tis grateful to DISSOLVE at Woe,

And from the SMALLEST VIOLENCE to shrink!

They are universally considered as the MODELS of every just and virtuous sentiment—and we naturally look up to them as PATTERNS in all the softer Virtues. Their EXAMPLES, therefore, in ABSTAINING FROM THE USE OF WEST INDIA PRODUCE—must silence every murmur—must refute every objection—and render the performance of the Duty as UNIVERSAL as their INFLUENCE.

F I N I S.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

A Letter to the Rev. John Martin,

Occasioned by

HIS INTENDED SPEECH

ON THE

REPEAL

13 MR 63

OF THE

Corporation and Test Acts.

PRICE 6d.

F I N I S H

